Dear CSO Permittee,

As you know, the Development and Evaluation of Alternatives report is due on July 1, 2019. This is a critical point in the development of the CSO Long Term Control plans and input on the alternatives is required to be gathered from the Supplemental CSO Team and the public prior to submitting the document to the NJDEP.

The CSO Supplemental Team is intended to be a resource to you and to “enable you to better develop an outreach program that reaches a broad base of citizens.” Supplemental Team members are to “provide input on the evaluation of CSO control alternatives, the selection of the CSO controls, and the planning process” (from Section G.2.c of the NJDEP CSO Permit).

Below are recommendations from (your group) on how to best inform and engage a broad range of citizens in the evaluation of alternatives.

Recommendations for engaging the public in the evaluation of alternatives:

1. (Name of municipality or utility) should hold interactive public workshops in their municipality that engage the public in a discussion about the alternatives rather than just a one-way presentation of the alternatives being evaluated to reduce combined sewer overflows.
2. Additional workshops should be proposed to local groups, such as green teams and environmental commissions as well as a presentation at City Council meetings. Interactions with the public should be tailored for a lay-audience rather than high-level technical engineering specifics. (See # 4 below.)
3. (Name of municipality or utility) and consultants working on the plans should detail what they considered in their evaluation of green infrastructure and how they measured community benefits.
4. (Name of municipality or utility) should focus on the information that is most critical to the public such as flooding, floatables (e.g., litter), public access to waterfronts, affordability, green infrastructure, workforce opportunities and water quality. Presentations should begin with what will impact the public the most and at a very local level.
5. Presentations should include general information on the CSO permit that focus on the process and purpose of the public’s involvement in the alternatives analysis and the implementation of the LTCP.
6. Presentations should include sufficient time for the public to ask questions and time for the permittee to ask the public questions.
7. The Evaluation of Alternatives report should include an executive summary written for the layperson that clearly describes the alternatives studied, compares their costs and benefits; and the community input gathered.

(name of your group) supports the the following recommendations on general public outreach that were submitted from several Municipal Action Teams to permit holders last year to assist with community outreach.

* Designate consistent dates and times for public meetings
* Provide an agenda for each meeting at least one week in advance
* Develop a publicly accessible online platform for sharing of meeting materials, including presentations, meeting schedules, agendas, documents produced under the CSO permit, fact sheets and other educational material
* Provide multilingual information on the initiative, including fact sheets and points of contact for additional information
* Presentations by all parties should explain clearly any technical jargon and quantitative data
* Establish a feedback-loop communication model, where there is a clear route through which the public and the permittees can share information and comments, and indicate how this feedback is being incorporated into the resulting plans
* Provide not just a timeline of the permit deliverables, but also indication of where there is opportunity for public comment within that timeline, and
* Release key documents (e.g. Alternatives Analysis, etc.) in draft form, with enough time for meaningful public comment, before they are finalized

Sincerely,